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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines
Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *review_editor@platypus1917.org*. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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The Platypus Review

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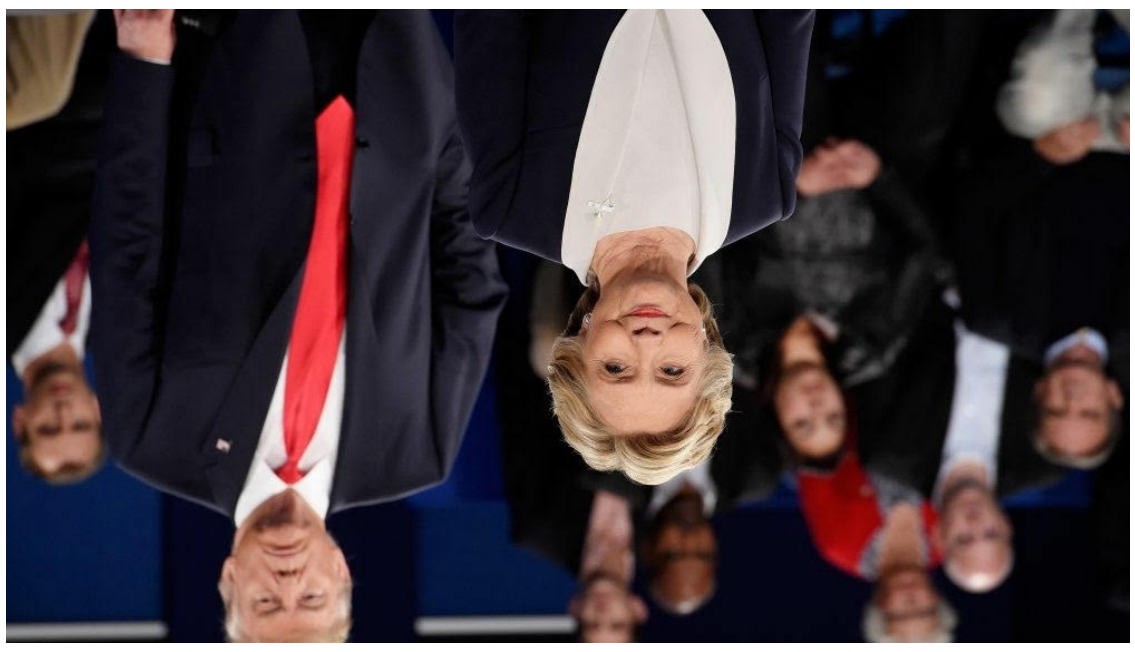
Why I wish Hillary had won

Distractions of anti-Trump-ism

Chris Cutrone



Presented at the Left Forum 2018 on the panel "Has 'the Left' Accommodated Trump (and Putin)? A Debate," with Ravi Ball, Brendan Cooney, Anne Jaclard, Daphne Lawless and Bill Weinberg, organized by the Marxist-Humanist Initiative at John Jay College in NYC on June 2, 2018. A video recording of the event is available online at: <https://youtu.be/tUvBeX002JY>.

AS A MARXIST academic professional and a gay man living in a Northern city, married to a nonwhite Muslim immigrant, it would have been beneficial to me for Hillary Clinton to have been elected President of the U.S. That would have served my personal interests. No doubt about it.

I am opposed to all of Trump's policies.

I am especially opposed to Trump on his signature issue, immigration. But I was opposed to Obama on this as well, and would have been opposed to Hillary too. I am opposed to DACA and its hierarchy of supposedly "deserving" recipients. "Full citizenship rights for all workers!"

One response to Trump's "Make America Great Again!" was a Mexican nationalist slogan, "Make America Mexico again!" But, as a Marxist, I go one step further: I am for the union of Mexico and the U.S. under one government — the dictatorship of the proletariat. But Trump made Rudy Giuliani and Jeff Sessions wear hats saying "Make Mexico Great Again Also." This was wholly sincere, at least on Trump's part but probably also for Sessions and Giuliani. Why not? If I am opposed to making America great again, then I suppose I am also opposed to making Mexico great, too.[1]

For the purposes of the struggle for socialism I seek to pursue, I wish Hillary had won the election. All the anti-Trump protest going on is a distraction from the necessary work, and, worse, Trump feeds discontent into the Democrats as the party of "opposition." With Hillary in office, this would have been less the case — however, we must remember that, had she won, Hillary still would have faced a Republican Congressional majority, and so we would have still heard about how important it would be to elect Democrats this year!

I am opposed to Trump's law-and-order conservatism. Not that I am against law and order per se, mind you, and perhaps I am not even so opposed to the order and law of society as it is now. I play by the rules and follow the law. Why wouldn't I? — And, anyway, honestly, who here doesn't: "rebels," all?

But I am aware that laws are selectively enforced and that the social order is run by those who don't always play by the rules — don't always play by their own rules! I am aware that the social order and the law are used as excuses for things that are not so lawful and orderly, for things that are not so social. I am aware of Trump's demagogy.

But it is funny watching the established social and political order go into fits over Trump's insistence on law and order!

Trump's election gave the "Left" something to do — they should be grateful! They would have been bored under Hillary. Especially after 8 years of Obama. "Fascism" is much more exciting, isn't it?

I would have been grateful if Hillary had been elected instead — *Saturday Night Live*'s jokes about Hillary are much funnier than about Trump.

My family voted for Trump — mostly. My mother and my brother and his wife voted for Trump. But my father voted for Hillary. When Hillary collapsed due to fatigue from pneumonia, my father dutifully went to get his pneumonia shot. But my mother previously had voted twice for Obama; I'm not sure if my father did, too — he might have voted for McCain and Romney.

In the primaries, I intended to vote for Bernie, but it turned out the Democrats sent the wrong ballots to my precinct (which was more likely to vote for Bernie than other precincts: I thus personally witnessed in action the Democrats' suppression of votes for Bernie in the primaries), so I went to the (empty) Republican line and voted for Trump. — In November, too: I knew that Hillary would win Illinois, but I wanted her to win by one vote less: no sense rewarding the Democrats for being greedy.

I expected Trump to win.

From the very moment that Trump descended the golden escalator and announced his candidacy, I thought he could win. As time went on, I increasingly thought that he would win.

I had mixed feelings about this.

On the one hand, I dreaded the shit-show that ensued in Trump's campaign and that I knew would only get worse if he was elected.

But on the other hand, I felt an obligation as a teacher to prepare my students for Trump's victory. — If he had not won, nothing would have been lost: my students didn't require any special preparation for a Clinton Presidency. But if Trump won, I knew that there would be a great deal of confusion — and scare-mongering by the Democrats. I couldn't stand by and watch my students be lied to.

I had lived through the Reagan Revolution and watched *The Day After* on television along with everyone else. I heard Reagan denounced as a "fascist" by the "Left" and experienced the multiple anti-climaxes of Mondale and Dukakis. The world hadn't ended. As an adult, I lived through the George W. Bush Presidency, 9/11 and the War on Terror, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the financial crash, and the "change we can believe in," the election of the First Black President. In all that time, not much changed. At least not much attributable to the Presidency.

So I didn't expect much to change with Trump either.

But I did expect a lot of hysterics in response. I knew that my students would be scared. I wanted to protect them from that.

So I sought to get out ahead of it.

My students asked me to write a statement on the election in the beginning of the new academic year before the election, something short that could be handed out as a flyer.

So I wrote, "Why not Trump?"[2] — which is why I was invited here to speak to you now: to answer for my alleged crime. It was not an endorsement, nor an equivocation, but an honest question: Why not Trump? Perhaps it was too philosophical.

As I wrote in that article, I thought that the mendacity of the status quo defending itself against Trump was a greater threat than Trump himself. I was prompted to re-read Hannah Arendt's article on the Pentagon Papers, "Lying in Politics:" she said that the ability to lie was inextricably connected to the ability to create new things and change the world.

I don't know.

I did find however a difference in quality and character between Trump's lies and the Democrats'.

The only argument I found for Hillary was that we lived in the "best of all possible worlds" — as Voltaire's Professor Pangloss described it in *Candide*. I didn't want to be Professor Pangloss. I wanted to spare my students that.

But perhaps we did live in the best of all possible worlds under Obama, and would have continued to do so under Hillary. Perhaps Trump really has ruined everything for everyone. Perhaps the world has come to an end.

I don't know.

I wish Hillary had won — so I could have found out. | **P**

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1 Cf. the newly elected President of Mexico Andrés Manuel López Obrador's open letter to President Trump of July 12, 2018, available online at: < https://lopezobrador.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Traducción-de-cortesía.pdf>.

2 *Platypus Review* 89 (September 2016), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2016/09/06/why-not-trump/>.

Ends of philosophy

Chris Cutrone

Prepared opening remarks for an internal discussion by members of Platypus on "Marxism and philosophy" to be held on August 11, 2018.

Misery

MARXISM CONSIDERED PHILOSOPHY as "bourgeois ideology." This meant, first and foremost, radical bourgeois philosophy, the modern philosophy of bourgeois emancipation, the thought of the revolt of the Third Estate. But pre-bourgeois philosophy, traditional philosophy, was also addressed as bourgeois ideology, as ideology. But ideology is a modern phenomenon. There's little point in calling either Aristotle or Augustine "ideology." It is when philosophy is invoked in bourgeois society that it becomes ideological. (Religion, too!)

So what is meant by philosophy as "ideology"?

This goes to the issue of Marxist "ideology-critique." What did Marxism mean by ideology as "false consciousness"? "False" in what way? For if bourgeois ideology were considered the ideology of the sociological group of the bourgeoisie — capitalists — then there would be nothing "false" about it: it would be the consciousness adequate to the social being of the ruling class; it would be the true consciousness of the bourgeoisie. So it must be false not for the bourgeoisie but rather for others — for the "proletariat." This kind of "class analysis" of ideology would be concerned that the workers not fall for the ideology of the ruling class. It would be a warning against the workers adopting the idealism of the bourgeoisie that would blind them to their real social condition in capitalism. The idea here is that somehow the workers would remain ignorant of their exploitation by the capitalists if they remained mired in bourgeois ideology.

Of course Marxism was originally no such "material analysis" — debunking — of wrong thinking. No.

Rather, the original Marxist ideology-critique — Marx and Engels's ideology-critique of bourgeois society — was the immanent dialectical critique of the way society in capitalism necessarily appears to its members, bourgeois and proletarian — capitalists and workers — alike. It was the critique of the true consciousness of the workers as well as of the capitalists.

Now, that formulation just lost me 99% of ostensible "Marxists" as well as all of the rest of the "Left," whether socialist or liberal, who do indeed think that the poor benighted workers and other subaltern need us intellectuals to tell them what their true social interests are.

This is not what Marxism — Marx and Engels — originally thought, however.

Marxism began with the critique of socialism, specifically with the critique of the most prominent socialist thinker of Marx and Engels's formative moment in the 1840s, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon — who coined the term "anarchism" — claimed that he respected only three authorities, intellectually, Adam Smith, Hegel and the Bible!

Marxism is usually thought of as the synthesis of German Idealist philosophy, British political-economy, and French socialist politics. But what Marxism actually was was the immanent dialectical critique of these three phenomena, which Marx and Engels considered three different forms of appearance of the same thing: the most advanced bourgeois ideology of their time, of the early–mid 19th century. They were all true expressions of their historical moment, of the Industrial Revolution. But as such, they were also all false.

Proudhon wrote of the "philosophy of misery," attacking the heirs of Adam Smith in Utilitarianism — James Mill and Jeremy Bentham — and other contemporary British political economists such as Malthus and David Ricardo and their French counterparts. Marx wrote his first major work on political economy and the class struggle in industrial capitalism as a critique of Proudhon, cleverly inverting its title, *The Poverty [Misery] of Philosophy*.

I was deeply impressed by this work — and especially by its title — when I first read it as an aspiring young "Marxist" in college. It signified to me a basic truth, which is that the problem of capitalism and its potential overcoming in socialism was not a matter of "philosophy," not a problem of thinking. Reading further, in Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, I read and deeply internalized Marx's injunction that "communism is a dogmatic abstraction" which was "one-sided," expressing the same thing as its opposite, private property, and, like bourgeois society itself, was internally divided, for instance, between collectivism and individualism, and so could not be considered a vision of an emancipated future society, but only a negation of the present. I had read in Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* their critique of "reactionary socialism," and their observation that everything of which communism stood accused was actually the "specter" of what capitalism itself was already doing — "abolishing private property," among other things.

This all told me that, for Marx and Engels at least, the problem of bourgeois ideology was not a matter that could be addressed let alone rectified by proper methodology — by a kind of right-thinking opposed to it.

In short, I recognized early on that Marxism was not some better philosophy.

Marxism was not a philosophical critique of philosophy, but rather something else entirely. For instance, Marx and Engels's critique of the Young Hegelians was not as philosophers, but in their philosophical claims for politics. This was also true of Lenin's critique of the Machians among the Bolsheviks (in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, 1908). The critique was of the *relation* between philosophy and politics. It was thus also not a political critique of philosophy.

Ends

I have titled my talk here, "Ends of philosophy," after the title for the week in our Platypus primary Marxist reading group syllabus when we read Karl Korsch's 1923 essay on "Marxism and philosophy," the recommended background reading for today's discussion. In the syllabus week title as well as here, I intend to play on the multiple meanings of the word "ends." What are the ends of philosophy, according to Marxism, in terms of its telos, its goals, its purposes, and its satisfaction; what would it take to attain and thus overcome the aspirations of philosophy?

Specifically, what would it take to satisfy bourgeois — that is to say, modern — philosophy? What would make philosophy superfluous?

This is posed in the same way that Marxism sought to make labor as social value superfluous. How does labor seek to abolish itself in capitalism? The same could be said of philosophy.

What would it take to bring philosophy to an end — to its own end? Not by denying the need for philosophy, but by satisfying it.

But there have been other moments, before (and after) Marxism, which sought to overcome philosophy through its satisfaction, through satisfying the need for philosophy.

The need for — the necessity of — philosophy in the modern world is different from its need previously — fundamentally different. The need to account for freedom in bourgeois emancipation was new and different; this did not motivate and inform traditional philosophy. But it fundamentally tasked modern philosophy — at least the philosophy that mattered most to Marxism, the Enlightenment and German Idealism at its culmination. But the need for philosophy in capitalism is also different from its need in the bourgeois revolution.

Please allow me to address several different historical moments of the end of philosophy. I use this concept of moments of the "end of philosophy" instead of alternative approaches, such as varieties of "anti-philosophy," because I think that trying to address Marxism as an anti-philosophy is misleading. It is also misleading in addressing other such supposed "anti-philosophies," such as those of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Existentialism, Heidegger, etc., as well as other traditions entirely, such as the Enlightenment *philosophes* contra "philosophy," or Empiricism and Analytic Philosophy contra "metaphysics." (For instance, Heidegger sought the potential end to "thousands of years of Western metaphysics," going all the way back to Plato.) Yet all these various phenomena express to my mind a common issue, namely the problem of "philosophy" *per se* in the modern era, both in the era of bourgeois emancipation and subsequently in capitalism.

What is "philosophy," such that it can experience an end? It is not merely its etymological meaning, the love of knowledge, or wisdom, or the love of thinking. Philosophers are not merely smart or sage — not merely sophists, clever thinkers: philosophy cannot be considered merely the mastery of logic or of semantics. If that were true, then most lawyers would be better philosophers than most avowed "philosophers."

The end of philosophy cannot be considered an end to sophistry, finally putting the clever fellows down. It cannot be considered an analogue to Shakespeare's "First, we kill all the lawyers." It is not meant to be the triumph of Philistinism. Although you might think so from a lot of "Marxist" deprecation of philosophy, especially as "bourgeois ideology." Such "Marxists" want to put a stop to all mystification by putting a stop to the mystifiers of bourgeois society, the lackeys — the paid liars — of the capitalist bourgeoisie. They want to stop the "philosophers" from pulling the wool down over the eyes of the exploited and oppressed. This is not my meaning. — This was not even Socrates's (Plato's) meaning in taking down the Sophists.

Authoritarianism

Philosophy cannot be considered, either negatively or positively, as the arrogation of all thinking: it is not some Queen of the Sciences that is to make proper sense of and superintend any and all human thought in every domain. It is not the King of Reason; not the thought-police. Marxism did not seek to replace philosophy in such a role. No. Yet this seems to be precisely what everyone wants from philosophy — or from anti-philosophy. They want their thinking dictated to them.

Korsch addresses this as "Bonapartism in philosophy:" we seem to want to be told how and what to think by philosophers — or by anti-philosophers. It is an authoritarian impulse. But one that is an authentic expression of our time: capitalism brings forth its own Philosopher Kings.

This is not at all what the immediate predecessors for Marxist thought in philosophy, Kant and Hegel, considered as their task: Kant, in "beginning" philosophy (anew), and Hegel in "completing" this, did not seek to replace the thinking of others. No. Precisely the opposite: they sought to free philosophy, to make it "worldly." They thought that they could do so precisely because they found that the world had already become "philosophical."

After them, they thought there would no longer be a need to further develop Philosophy as such, but only the need for philosophical reflection in the various different diverse domains of human activity. Our modern academic institutions reflect this: one receives the PhD, Doctor of Philosophy, in Chemistry, meaning one is qualified to "doctor," to minister and correct, to treat the methods and attendant thinking — the "philosophy" — of the science of chemistry, without however necessarily becoming an expert specialist "philosopher of science," or studying the specialized discipline Philosophy of Science *per se*. According to Lukács, such specialized knowledge as found in academia as well as in the various technical vocations — such as law, journalism, art, etc. — exhibited "reification" in capitalism, a disintegrated particularization of atomized consciousness, in which losing the forest for the trees was the very predicate of experience and knowledge. But this was the opposite of what Kant and Hegel had expected. They expected not disintegration but the organic, living and changing *relations* of diverse multiplicity.

Marx found a very different world from Kant and Hegel's, after the Industrial Revolution. It was not a philosophical world in capitalism — not an "enlightened" realm of "sober senses," to which bourgeois philosophy had aspired, but something much darker. It was a "phantasmagoria" of "commodity fetishism," full of beguiling "metaphysical subtleties," for which one needed to refer to the "mist-enveloped regions of religion" for proper models. In capitalism, bourgeois society was sunk in a kind of animism: a world of objects exhibiting "theological niceties."

There was a need for a new Enlightenment, a Second Enlightenment specific to the needs of the 19th century, that is, specific to the new needs of industrial capitalism, for which the prior thinking of bourgeois emancipation, even at its best, for instance by Rousseau, Adam Smith, Kant and Hegel, was not equipped to adequately address. It needed a new recognition of the relation between social being and consciousness.

But for Marx and Engels, this new task of enlightenment was something that could not be accomplished philosophically — could not be brought to fruition in thinking — but only in actual political struggle and the transformation of society.

History

This was because, unlike the emancipation of bourgeois society, which took several centuries and came to consciousness of itself as such only late, no longer cloaking itself in the religious garb of Christianity — the Protestant Reformation as some return to true Christianity of the original Apostles, freed from the corruptions of the Church — and arrived at self-consciousness only at the end of its process of transformation, in the 18th century. As Hegel put it, "The Owl of Minerva [that is, knowledge] flies at dusk:" proper consciousness comes only "post-festum," after the fact of change.

But Marx and Engels found the task of socialism in capitalism to be motivated by a new need. The proletarianization of the bourgeois social relations of labor — the society of cooperative production in crisis with the Industrial Revolution — required a new consciousness of contradiction, a "dialectical" and "historical" "materialism," to properly recognize its tasks. As Marx put it, the social revolution of the 19th century — in contradistinction to the bourgeois revolution — could not take its poetry from the past, but needed to take its poetry from the future. This was quite a paradoxical formulation, especially since Marx and Engels explicitly abjured "utopian socialism," finding it a realm of images of capitalism, and not of a world beyond it.

This was because they found the workers' struggles against the capitalists to be motivated by bourgeois consciousness, the consciousness of the bourgeois revolution. Socialism was born in the Jacobinism of the French Revolution, for instance, in the former Jacobin Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals, still motivated by the aspirations of "liberty, equality and fraternity." Proudhon, for example, was motivated in his anarchist socialism, avowedly, by Adam Smith and Hegel (and the Bible) — animated, unabashedly, by bourgeois political economy and philosophy.

Marx and Engels didn't think that this was wrong, but only inadequate. They didn't offer an alternative to Proudhon — to Smith and Hegel (or the Bible!) — but only a critique of how bourgeois thought mystified the crisis and task of capitalism. The world necessarily appeared in bourgeois terms — there were no other terms. There was no other form of consciousness. There was no other philosophy. Nor was there a need for a new philosophy.

Bourgeois philosophy, for Marx and Engels, had successfully summed up and appropriated all prior philosophical enlightenment. They agreed with Kant and Hegel. Bourgeois social thought had successfully summed up and completed all prior thinking about society. Marx and Engels neither disputed nor sought to replace it. They were concerned only with its self-contradiction in capitalism. Not its hypocrisy, but its authentic antinomies, which both drove it on and left it stuck. The bourgeois "end of history" turned out to be the opposite of what it intended: not a final stage of freedom, but rather a final stage of unfreedom; the crossroads of "socialism or barbarism."

Impossibility

This affected the status of philosophy. Bourgeois philosophy no longer described freedom but rather unfreedom. Or, more dialectically, it described both: the reproduction of unfreedom in the struggle for freedom. As a result, the task of freedom was no longer expressed by the need for all human activity to achieve an adequate — Hegelian — philosophically reflective self-consciousness, but rather to realize in practice and thus recognize in consciousness the limits of such self-consciousness, of such philosophical reflection. There was a crisis in radical bourgeois philosophy. The crisis and decay of Hegelianism was an authentic historical phenomenon, not a mistake.

Like liberal democracy, philosophy in capitalism was no longer itself, and was no longer tasked with becoming itself, attaining its aspirations, but rather was tasked with overcoming itself, superseding its achievements. The achievements of bourgeois emancipation seemed ruined in the 19th century.

Indeed, capitalism already accomplished such self-overcoming of bourgeois society, but perversely, negating itself without satisfying itself. In so doing, it constantly re-posed the task of achieving itself, as an impossible necessity. Bourgeois philosophy became the opposite of what it was, utopian. Not worldly philosophy, but an ideal, a mere notion, mocked by the real, ugly and anything-but-philosophical world.

Because of this — precisely because of this — bourgeois philosophy did not end but constantly reinvented itself, however on an increasingly impoverished basis. It radically revolutionized itself, but also, in so doing, radically undermined itself.

Philosophy remained necessary but proved impossible. It disintegrated, into epistemology, ontology and ethics. They went their separate ways. But they also drove themselves into blind alleys — dead-ends. This actually indicates the task of philosophy to overcome itself, however in perverted form.

Metaphysics

So, what is philosophy? One straightforward way of answering this is, simply, metaphysics. Kant, following Rousseau, had overcome the division and opposition between Rationalism and Empiricism by finding a new foundation for metaphysics. This was the Kantian "Copernican Turn" and "revolution" in philosophy. But it was not simply a new metaphysics, but rather a new account of metaphysics — of philosophy — itself. Moreover, it was revolutionary in an additional sense: it was not only a revolution, but also accounted for itself as revolutionary. This is because it was a metaphysics of change, and not merely change but radical qualitative transformation: it was a revolutionary account of the fundamental transformability of the substance of philosophy itself. In short, it was a philosophy of freedom. It was the self-reflection of practical freedom in society — that society made human life's transcendence of nature possible, at all, but in so doing created new problems to be worked through and overcome.

It is precisely this metaphysics of freedom, however, that has gone into crisis and disintegrated in capitalism. This has been the expression of the crisis and disintegration — the decay — of bourgeois society.

The goal of philosophy in overcoming itself is to free thinking from an overarching and underlying metaphysics at all. Kant and Hegel thought that they had done so already, but capitalism — in its crisis of the metaphysics of bourgeois society — revealed that there was indeed an underlying and overarching metaphysics still to be overcome, that of social practice — society — itself. The self-production and self-overcoming of the subject in its socially and practically objective activity — labor — needed to be overcome.

The end of philosophy — the end of a singular metaphysics, or of metaphysics *per se* — aims at the freeing of both action and thinking from any unitary framework. It is the freeing of an ever-expanding and limitless — without end — diverse multiplicity of new and different forms of acting, being and knowing.

Postmodernism was, as Moishe Postone put it, "premature post-capitalism." It aimed at the freeing of the "small-s subjects from the big-S Subject." It also aimed at freedom from capital-H History. It meant overcoming Hegel's philosophy of history.

We already live in such freedom in bourgeois society, however perverted by capitalism. Diverse activities already inhabit different realms of being and call forth different kinds of ethical judgments. Doctors and lawyers practice activities that define being — define the "rights of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness" — in different ways, and are hence ethically bound in different ways. Doctors discipline themselves ethically differently from scientists. Among scientists, Biology has a different epistemology from Physics: there are different methods because there are different objects. There is no "philosophy" in the sense of a metaphysical logic that encompasses them all. Lawyers, for example, practice differential ethics: prosecutors and defense attorneys in criminal law are bound by different rules of behavior; the practice of civil law is ethically distinct from criminal law; the rules of evidence are different. We do not seek to bind society to one form of knowledge, one code of conduct, or one way of life. There is no "philosophy" that could or should encompass them all. It would be arrogant to claim that there is one singular logic that can be mastered by anyone for governing everything.

Bourgeois society has already established well the reasonable limits to philosophy and its competence.

In Ancient civilization there were differentiated realms of being, knowing and acting. There was a caste system, in which there were different laws for peasants; for merchants; for artisans (and for different kinds of artisans, for different arts and different sciences); and for the nobility; and for the clergy. But they were unified in a Divine Order of the Great Chain of Being. There was heterogeneity, but all with a single origin in God: all of God's creatures in all of God's Creation. That mystery was to remain unknown to Man — known only to God. There was a reason for everything, but only God could know it. There was not philosophy but theology, and theology was not to arrogate to itself the place of the Mind of God, but only ponder Man's place in and relationship to it. Theology established the limits to man's knowledge of God: we knew only what God had revealed to us, through his Covenant. We all heard the Word of God; but God told His different creatures different things. In overcoming theology, philosophy did not seek to replace it. It sought to explore the mind of man, not to relate to and limit itself with respect to the Mind of God. It was not concerned with Divine or Natural limits, but with freedom.

There is no possible one single or once-and-for-all account of freedom, for then freedom would not be free. There is no possible account of "being" free, but only of *becoming* free. And there is only one such account, that of bourgeois emancipation from traditional civilization. It was to set free all the diverse and multiple activities of mankind, in relation to other humans, to Nature, and to ourselves.

Overcoming

Marx was both a Hegelian and departed from Hegel, with a historical and not a philosophical difference. As Marx put it, for Hegel himself the Hegelian system was not ready-made and finished as it was for those who came after. As Marx observed, Hegelianism went into crisis for real historical reasons, not due to misunderstanding by his followers; but rather the crisis came from Hegelian philosophy's actual contact with the world, and that world had become as internally

"Ends of philosophy" continues on page 4

"Ends of philosophy", cont. from page 3

contradictory in capitalism as Hegelianism became in contact with it. The Hegelian dialectic is both appropriate and inappropriate to the problem of capitalism. The crisis and disintegration of Hegelianism was a crisis of metaphysics — of philosophy — at a higher and deeper and not a lower or more superficial level from Hegelianism. Hegelianism was falsified not in itself but by history. But Hegelianism was also borne out by history as the last word in philosophy — in metaphysics. Marxism cannot be purged of its Hegelianism without becoming incoherent; Marxism remains Hegelian, albeit with what Lukács called an "additional twist" in the "pure historicization of the dialectic."

If society in capitalism remains bourgeois in its ideals, with the goal of providing opportunities for social labor, materially, it has become its opposite: as capitalist, it prioritizes not labor but capital, and at the expense of labor. This means society is tasked with the material challenge of overcoming its ideals. But, as Marx recognized, this can only be done on the basis of this society's own ideals, in and through their self-contradiction. In philosophy, this means the task expressed by the self-contradiction of Hegelianism.

Capitalism is the model of the Marxist-Hegelian procedure of immanent dialectical critique: this is how capitalism itself moves, how it reproduces itself through self-contradiction. Capitalism is its own practical critique, reproducing itself by constantly overcoming itself. As Marx put it, the only limit to capital is capital itself; but capital is the transgression of any and all limits. It is the way capitalism overcomes itself, its dynamic process of change, which is its unfreedom, its self-limitation. The Marxian horizon of freedom beyond capitalism is freedom beyond the Hegelian dialectic, beyond the bourgeois dialectic of transformation — beyond labor as a process of self-overcoming through production.

There thus remains a unitary metaphysics binding all social practices, dominating, constraining and distorting their further development in freedom under capitalism: the bourgeois right of labor. The form of total freedom in bourgeois emancipation — self-production in society — has become in capitalism the form of total unfreedom. The social condition for labor has become that of the self-destruction of labor in capital. The goal of labor in capital is to abolish itself; but it can do so only by realizing itself — as self-contradiction. Hegel's "negative labor of the concept" must be completed; short of that, it dominates us.

Overcoming this will mean overcoming metaphysics — overcoming philosophy. At least overcoming philosophy in any way known — or knowable — hitherto. | **P**

Further reading:

Cutrone

Chris Cutrone, "Book review: Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy* (2008)," *Platypus Review* 15 (September 2009), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2009/09/03/book-review-karl-korsch-marxism-and-philosophy/>.

Cutrone, "Rejoinder on Korsch," *PR* 20 (February 2010), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2010/02/26/rejoinder-to-david-black-on-karl-korschs-marxism-and-philosophy/>.

Cutrone, "Book review: Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (1981, 1995 and 2009): Gillian Rose's 'Hegelian' critique of Marxism," *PR* 21 (March 2010), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2010/03/15/gillian-roses-hegelian-critique-of-marxism/>.

Cutrone, "Revolution without Marx? Rousseau, Kant and Hegel," *PR* 61 (November 2013), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2013/11/01/rousseau-kant-hegel/>.

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Cutrone, "Book review: Andrew Feenberg, *The Philosophy of Praxis* (2014)," *Marxism & Philosophy Review of Books* (February 14, 2015), available online at: <https://marxandphilosophy.org.uk/reviews/7988_the-philosophy-of-praxis-review-by-chris-cutrone/>.

Cutrone, "Back to Herbert Spencer! Industrial vs. militant society." *PR* 82 (December 2015 – January 2016), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2016/01/12/back-to-herbert-spencer/>.

Korsch

Karl Korsch, "Marxism and philosophy" (1923), in *Marxism and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970 and 2008), available online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/korsch/1923/marxism-philosophy.htm>.

Korsch, "The Marxist dialectic" (1923), available online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/korsch/1923/marxist-dialectic.htm>.

Korsch, "On materialist dialectic" (1924), available online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/korsch/1924/materialist-dialectic.htm>.

"Interview Gregory Claeys", cont. from page 2

the whole of Marx's thought. Marx here portrayed the famous theory of alienation, of the alienation of the worker from themselves, from other workers, from the object or product of labor, and from the term taken from Feuerbach, "species-being," from our sociable essence. This theory evokes an image of Marx as a kind of humanist. And for this reason, when the text was first published, many existing communist regimes were extremely suspicious about it. It appeared to indicate that actually-existing socialist or communist societies in fact rendered people just as alienated as they were under capitalism. Heaven forbid! They did not want to draw that conclusion, so there was a massive effort to suppress this text. But by the late 1960s, this was the entry-point for almost all readers of Marx. And if you're first encountering Marx when you're 18, 19, 20, this is a really exciting text. It appears to offer a kind of existential view of humanity's plight in general, namely that we are alienated as we enter the world. It appears to identify the productive process as the crucial site that generates this alienation, but it also hints at the fact that there are other forms of alienation, and underling all of this still is the possibility of developing a higher form of humanity. Now this is a legacy that Marx takes into the later writings. There has been a lot of controversy, of course, about the degree to which Marx changes his mind from this point onward, because he does not publish the text and particularly because the text seems to center upon Feuerbach's theory of species-being, which is an account of the kind of innate sociability we possess. We naturally want to live communally with other human beings, we naturally want to live on good terms with them. What interferes in modern society is the fact that the economic system makes us all competitors. It pits us all ruthlessly, mercilessly against one another and makes it impossible for us to really offer the kind of mutual assistance that the concept of species-being suggests is the essence of what it is to be human. So, when Marx takes this as his critical standpoint in 1844. More than anything else, he says, "What's wrong with capitalism is that it does not allow us to fulfill the potential of our humanity. It does not allow us to fulfill the creative possibility of development, through the division of labor in particular." Adam Smith's famous account in the *Wealth of Nations* is the starting point in the *Manuscripts*: through the division of labor we become more and more narrowly specialized, less and less capable of developing fully and richly all of those creative capacities.

SL: Can you tie that to what Engels is bringing from the Owenites in terms of their thinking about cooperation and the kind of influence that has on Marx?

GC: Engels' contribution at this point is complex and extremely interesting. When he meets Marx he has much more practical experience of what the factory system is. And in 1845, the next year, he'll go on to publish *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, still one of the greatest accounts of the life of the urban working classes in the Industrial Revolution. But Engels is also much more attracted to the sort of small-scale communities that many of the early socialists suppose. This is not just the Owenites, but also Fourier and his followers. Those would recommend that the optimum model of association of human beings is a small-scale community, maybe a thousand, maybe fifteen-hundred people, sharing property in common. By living on a small scale, they are to regulate the communal relations of the group because everybody knows what everybody else is doing all the time. So you can trace this sort of utopianism all the way back to Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1516. The idea that the optimal form of community will include a kind of mutual surveillance. It sounds kind of sinister today, but it is not really envisioned that way by these writers. People will not really have the opportunity to break the most fundamental rules of the community, because everybody's living under the eyes of everybody else. So Engels finds this quite attractive and he studies some examples. A number of them are North American, the Shakers and so on. And he's quite enthusiastic about the Owenites as well. The problem is that the great Owenite final effort to create just such a community, for which a vast amount of money is pooled, fails at exactly this moment in 1844-45. And with it, seemingly goes out the window the entire possibility of socialism being realizable in terms of a small-scale community. So, between 1845 then and 1848, by the time of the *Manifesto* in particular, Marx and Engels are clearly trying to sidestep the possibility that the failure of communitarian Owenism means the failure of socialism as such. By 1847-8, they move to the view that if socialism is now to be realized, it will likely be revolutionary, first of all—that's what the *Manifesto* proclaims—and, secondly, it will take place at the level of the nation-state rather than the small-scale community. Still, Engels, later on in life, has a few complimentary remarks on Owen, Fourier, and company, about overcoming the division of labor between intellectual and manual labor, between countryside and cities, and so on. This is much more pervasively taken up by some other later socialists, William Morris most notably. But, by and large, Marxism after 1845 is oriented towards mostly revolutionary models, usually focused on the nation-state. Having said that, however, if you go back to 1844, of course, if Marx's critical standpoint is Feuerbach's conception of species-being: What's wrong with capitalism is it does not allow us to develop this natural communal impulse that we all possess. He drops the concept of species-being after 1845 and this has caused a lot of alarm amongst Marxist scholars, because this may have been the reason why he never publishes the 1844 manuscripts. If that is the case, then why are we paying it so much attention to today? Can we still legitimately regard it as the entry point into Marx's system as a whole? That's a crucial question.

What happens is that Feuerbach's concept is demolished by another Young Hegelian named Max Stirner, who is an anarchist, an egotistical anarchist, who says, "Oh, species-being is just theology, basically. It is just wishful thinking. It is the last stage of the Hegelian system and we do not want anything to do with such theological concepts." Feuerbach, of course, is famous for describing religion as a projection of an imaginary ideal community. It is all very amicable and sociable, but what is species being other than, Stirner is suggesting, a projection of our desire to have such harmony in this life? Stirner attempts, in short, a thorough demolition of all such religiously-based, theologically-derived social concepts. So what is Marx left with? If he rejects what is the central concept of the *Paris Manuscripts*, species being, what does he have? Well, the answer to this is that in *The German Ideology*, the text that he and Engels sit down and write over the winter of 1845-56 in Brussels. In it Marx says, "Okay, what we're going to do now is claim an entirely new system. We're going to call it the materialist conception of history. We're going to set aside all preceding forms of ideology, morality, religion, metaphysics, socialism and communism, and so on. We're going to proclaim an entirely new system, *and*," here comes the crucial point vis-á-vis species-being, "We'll not specify the morality of the new society. We will believe it will emerge out of actually-existing social relations." So, to go back to your question of cooperation, this now becomes absolutely essential to Marx's vision of the future. Rather than asking, "Is the failure of capitalism the failure to allow us to realize our species-being?" Marx now says, "There exists out there a communist movement. This movement is growing within capitalism. So, we are only describing an empirical process. We're not using a normative, moralistic precept or judgment, much less a theologically derived precept, to judge capitalism. All that we're doing is describing a process that now exists." And Marx then says (and he will adhere to this view the rest of his life), "what the materialist conception of history consists of is an analysis of a series of modes of production of which the latest, vastly the most important, is the capitalist mode of production. In the course of the development of capitalism, very large numbers of workers are driven from the countryside into the factories and into the cities. This is the face of modernity. In the process of engaging with one another in very large numbers in the cities, they will become conscious of the deficiencies of capitalism, they will become conscious of their own homogeneous role as a class, as a proletariat. Once they become conscious, then, they gain a sense of cooperative enterprise, or solidarity, which grows out of the very process of work itself." So, it is not a norm, Marx insists, being imposed from without, it is something which emerges from the very process of capitalism itself. One of the things I have tried to with the book here is to adjudicate just how seriously we should take Marx's claim now that there is no existing moral perspective and he has legitimately ditched the concept of of species-being. What I have tried to do – and Marxists will no doubt take me to task for this – is I try in the first instance to describe Marx as utopian. I do not mean the word utopian in the negative or pejorative sense at all. I think utopianism is basically about being able to project into a fairly distant future trends in a given society and then asking the basic question, Is this the road you want to take? Or, are these roads in combination the way we want to move forward? And, if not, if this is somehow failing to allow us to develop our human potential, what can we do about it? So, that's a really good general question to ask in every situation, and Marx asks it repeatedly. Now, this is the reason why I call him both a utopian and an idealist. There is very clearly a set of ideals present from 1844 onwards right down through the end of Marx's life.

Marx adheres to the idea of all-rounded development, consistently. That's his most important critique of capitalism. It does not respect inequality, but the opera–tions of the division of labor. This is the starting point of Owen as well. And, of course, it is the starting point in chapter one, book one of *The Wealth of Nations* of Adam Smith. And Smith, by the end of *The Wealth of Nations*, in book five, says – he's having a kind of con–versation here with his friend Adam Ferguson, he uses the example of making pins – "Oh, well, I do realize that if you make somebody do nothing all day long but to cut a bit of wire in order to make pins, they're going to become as stupid as it is possible for a human being to become." I'm paraphrasing here. He says, essentially, "People are becoming appendages of machines." This is one of the great themes of the whole period from *The Wealth of Nations* right up to the present-day. We're asking people to become more and more like machines, because machines become our model of efficiency. The problem is this degrades our humanity. So, if we look carefully, then, at the relevant passages in particular in *Das Kapital*,a text that Marxists usually accord the status of Marx's most important work, we find exactly the same comments about mutilation, narrowing down and fragmentation of the possibility of human beings developing their full creative personalities, that we find in 1844. This is Marx's ideal. The ideal pre-exists the critique of capitalism, and it is there right through the end of Marx's life. I do not have any problems with both diagnosing this as an ideal—a utopian ideal—and commending it at the same time. it is a very humane approach to the problem of being a human being. We're not very good at imitating machines. It degrades us, mutilates us, renders us vastly less than we are capable of becoming. In that respect, Marx remains absolutely right.

SL: This really turns on the way in which social cooperation is turned against society in production, as well as the whole question of unemployment versus free time in capital.

GC: There's no doubt that one of the shifts in emphasis that occurs in Marx's later writings is towards the notion of rather than focusing on the process of production itself, as Marx does in the *Paris Manuscripts of 1844*, we ought to think about enabling the worker, creating a society where the workers possess the capability by having much more free time to educate themselves. So, the shift is away from alienation in production to the notion that free time is where the full creative development of the personality is going to take place. With this comes a certain reluctance, perhaps, to acknowledge that socially necessary labor—producing the commodities that everybody needs—is to remain, at least in the near and immediate future before machines do virtually all of this. People will still be working at mundane, boring jobs that make them unhappy. The crucial point is, until such a time that machines can do this, to minimize the amount of time they have to spend doing this. But both Marx and Engels do say later on, "Well, it is in the nature of the factory system that an authoritarian system of production to be imposed on the workers, because that's the only way to maximize production." So that is the shift, but I do not think that it is that dramatic, actually.

SL: The figures that you perhaps downplay in relation to other scholars are the Chartists and Proudhon. And then we should address 1848.

GC: It is not that I do not think these influences are present. And I have written a bit on Chartism and on Proudhon. Of course, through his *Philosophy of Poverty*, which Marx responds to, his *Philosophy of Poverty*, Proudhon is one of Marx's main rivals right through this period into the period of the First International. The Chartists are as such less important for both Marx and Engels than the Owenites by quite a long shot. In my book I had a very limited amount of space, so I explored Owenism more. Most of the Chartists were neither socialists nor revolutionaries. The Chartists that Marx and Engels become best acquainted with are George Harney and Ernest Jones. Both owe quite a bit to socialism, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

As for 1848: Of course, the revolution which occurred in 1848 succeed revolutions which have occurred previously: in France in 1830, but, most importantly, of course in 1789. The difference between the 1848 revolutions, which took place throughout Europe—North and South, East and West, but not in Britain, of course—is that for the first time a socialist alternative was genuinely presented as a possibility of what might follow the overthrow of the old system. Up to this point, the real alternative to the existing systems of monarchy and aristocracy found in different forms throughout Europe was a democratic republic. What 1848 does Marx summarizes very elegantly in *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848, which is the starting point for most students today. (Those who do not take the *Paris Manuscripts* as their starting point will begin here, because here we have a programmatic statement of what exactly Marx anticipates.) *The Manifesto* is a kind of summary of the whole account of the early schools of socialism, of Engels' confrontations with political economy and of Marx's economy, an account which here details how a sequential process of capitalist crises will bring about the ever-greater concentration of wealth in the hands of the few: Each crisis will cause more and more small-scale producers to be pushed down into the proletariat and will lead to the rich becoming richer. To go back to the 2008 discussion we had a while back, when he's conscious that this is the natural development, the rhythm of capitalism itself, the proletariat will now—having acquired, through solidarity and through the process of cooperation, and joined with and forced upon it in capitalism—see that its goal and its aim, its purpose, if you like, in history is to overthrow this system and to replace it with, firstly, the dictatorship of the proletariat, as Marx calls it just a few times. Then, eventually of course, comes the realization of communist society. So, 1848 is central for a lot of reasons. The *Manifesto* summarizes all the key developments from 1842-43 onwards. It determines that all the preexisting forms of socialism and communism are inadequate. It designates under the rubric of the materialist conception of history what the analysis of capitalism will look like and why the new agenda of common ownership—centralization of the means of production under the management of the state, and so on—will take the place of the existing system. So, that's the model essentially defined in 1848 that will be followed by most in the Marxist tradition right through the end of the 20th century.

SL: But, in some ways, democracy becomes a problem in 1848. After all, Louis Bonaparte is a vindicator of universal suffrage, stages his coup d'etat in the name of it, and is elected on that basis. And so the whole question of the cossack republic issuing into a kind of bonapartist democracy seems to be a political legacy of Marx's thinking that alluded to with reference to the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

GC: Well, Marx is of course deeply disappointed with the outcome of 1848, but he's in it for the long run. The crucial question that most people would ask at this point is, is not the dictatorship of the proletariat designed to centralize power in the hands of the new leaders of the communist party? So if we kind of Leninize Marx here, is not the Bolshevism of 1917 anticipated by this kind of discussion on Marx's part? And the answer to this is, by and large, it is not. Marx remains quite a traditional democrat right through the writings on the Paris Commune. Now, of course he never has to face a revolution, so he never has to face the crucial questions of what if there are splits amongst the communists themselves. What if they take two, three, four routes into the future? What if they assume different factions, and so on? What if leaders arise? Marx says very little about the role of leadership as such. Could it be possible that a small faction would rule dictatorially over the party and the party could rule dictatorially over the whole society? Could it then be possible, *á la* Lenin, for an individual to become a dictator within the party? And the answer to this is, right through the writings on the Paris Commune of 1871, is Marx remains a traditional democrat. Marx's view of the interim form of society is that the workers elect their own leaders by universal suffrage. Those leaders are subject to recall pretty much instantaneously and they are, crucially, paid no more than a worker's wage. This eliminates the ability of a professional political class—now we begin to wonder how over-optimistic Marx was in this regard— and the elimination, in turn, of a professional class of bureaucrats, though we know that the centralization and the management of production of the hands of a few managers implies an extraordinarily sophisticated and complex mechanism being in place in order to do this, more bureaucratic, indeed, than most capitalist societies. But as far as the democratic aspect is concerned, Marx's phrase "the dictatorship of the proletariat" is very misleading. Marx is really a traditional democrat. | **P**

Transcribed by Matt Cavagrotti

Karl Marx, utopian socialist

An interview with Gregory Claeys

Spencer A. Leonard

On May 9, 2018, Spencer A. Leonard interviewed Gregory Claeys, historian of socialism and author of Machinery, Money and the Millennium: From Moral Economy to Socialism, 1815–1860 *(1987),* Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920 *(2010), and* Marx and Marxism *(2018), among others. The day after recording the interview it was broadcast on "Radical Minds" on WHPK–FM (88.5 FM) in Chicago. What follows is an edited version of the interview.*

Spencer A. Leonard: This week we celebrated Marx's 200th birthday and the appearance of your book coincided with that. In broad terms, why have you written this book? What does the world need to know in 2018 about Karl Marx?

Gregory Claeys: I have been a historian of socialism for some thirty years or so, and I have thought about this for a long time. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and then the USSR between 1989 and 1991 led to, outside of China and a few other places, a relatively sharp, sudden decline in interest in Marx. Marxism by the middle of the 20th century, of course, has been notionally in one or another variant, the ideology that dominated more than half of the world's population. But after 1991, then this went into sharp decline. For 27 years, by and large, in the U.S. and in Western Europe—more, in fact, in Eastern Europe—relatively few people were reading Marx. So, I thought about doing this book now really for three reasons:

Firstly, of course, Marx is still the most influential thinker in human history, indisputably. There are very few parallels and they are all religious figures, although one could discuss the degree to which Marxism in one or another variance becomes a kind of secular religion. But simply historically, we want to know why that is the case. Why is Marxism influential? Why do people hold so fervently, loyally, dogmatically in many cases, to the basic ideas?

Secondly, of course, after 1991 we still have one very powerful nation, namely China, adhering to a variety of Marxism. And China is now the second-most powerful economy in the world, set to overtake the United States in the early 2020s. So, discounting Marx's influence in the 19th and 20th century, you would want to know what this ideology is if you're interested in the future of Chinese-Western relations. You want to know how the Chinese think. You want to know why and how they still believe that Marx is still the figure who is guiding them in the present and into the future.

The third reason, then, has much to do with the financial crisis (so-called) of 2008-9. As you may recall, for the first couple of years after there was a general tendency to treat this as just another crisis. Fairly widely there was the assumption that within three or four years there would be moderate recovery—if not full recovery, i.e. full employment, growth in the usual sense of the term. By about 2012-13 it was becoming increasingly obvious that this was not going to be the case. In fact, the economy was changing fairly dramatically. The effects of globalization were not negated but, in some respects, exacerbated and hastened by the financial crisis. Along with the decline in the number of decent jobs—the decline in the conditions and terms of employment, the decline in decent pensions, the relative decline in affluent middle-class jobs in particular—younger people born after the late 1980s to early 1990s now for the first time began to realize that their life chances were less than those of their parents' and their grandparents' generation, that their prospects in life therefore were not merely less, but actually probably declining.

If you look now back to 2012-14, two phenomena begin to arise in the last couple of years that have nothing to do with the 200th anniversary, although that certainly raised a fair amount of publicity on its own accord, but increased interest in Marx as a thinker. The first is that we recognize now that the latest stage of the Industrial Revolution—mechanization, often called robotization, the increasing introduction of robots. Not just in industry, to build large-scale commodities and so on, but also in services and also in many other spheres where we have traditionally had human employment. That this, projecting forwards now to the middle of the 21st century, and then the end, threatens much larger permanent unemployment for large parts of humanity than had been the case in the stages of the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the 20th century and just beginning of the 21st century. The current projections are that, by about 2050, some 30% of lost jobs will be replaced by machines. And if we project, then, further forward to the year 2100, then perhaps as much as much as sixty to seventy percent will disappear. But then there's another factor, again, the discourse sometimes referred to as climate change, but which is really environmental catastrophe. This started – if you pardon the expression – to warm up very substantially in just these same years. You may recall that prior to about 2010 or so, most discussions projected one to one and a half degrees celsius global warming. The worst case scenario was generally two degrees, or maybe slightly above. By about 2010, and certainly by 2014-2015, this discourse began to alter dramatically. People were now seriously contemplating an increase of over two degrees and indeed over three degrees celsius, which is now regarded as pretty much a catastrophic scenario—melting of both the polar caps; melting of all the glaciers; drastic heating therefore on the Earth's surface; rendering much of the center of the earth, the tropical region, pretty well uninhabitable; and a large rise in the ocean levels. This kind of dystopian, catastrophist scenario is, of course, inevitably linked to capitalism. One of the ironies about mixing all these things together now is that Marxism traditionally, by the time Marx formulates his mature ideas—I would say by the 1850s—is still oriented toward production, exchange, consumption, a high standard of living, the difference of course being that that standard of living is extended to the majority of the population and not confined only to the privileged bourgeoisie or middle classes. So, from this point of view, to cut to the end of this particular narrative, Marx does not offer us any kind of real solution to probably the single greatest problem facing us in the 21st century.

So that's three major reasons to look at Marx again. And if you look at the concentration of interest in Marx—mostly burgeoning in the 1960s and 70s, peaking around the middle of the 80s, and then going into sharp decline—most of that literature says nothing about environmental problems. Most of that literature says relatively little about how Marx might approach the problem of further advanced mechanization or—where there are passages, particularly in the *Grundrisse* in the so-called "fragment on machines," which hint at the possibility that in the future—there will be the possibility the working classes have much more free time to educate themselves precisely because machinery will now be doing so much of the dirty work that had previously been done by human beings. So, the reason for writing a book in 2018 is that in a lot of ways the secondary literature on Marx is pretty outdated. There have been some discoveries of texts—mostly letters and so on, full editions of various writings, etc. are now available—but the main reason is that history has moved on. The problems that we are facing in the 21st century are in some respects at least decidedly different from the Marx secondary literature address in the 1970s and 1980s.

Now having said that, of course, there is one major overlap, and that is capitalism. Capitalism not only has not gone away, it is alive and healthy. Although in the last couple of years there have been more pronouncements about its probable demise than certainly at any point in the last twenty-seven years or so since the collapse of the USSR. This is related not just to the central problem of our own time, the decade since the 2008 crisis, which is inequality—capitalism, of course, has produced since the late 1970s a sharper and more rapid growth in inequality than at any time previously. The concentration of wealth in the hands of the very few—in 2016 about eighty billionaires control the same amount of wealth as about half the world's population; by 2018, that's reduced to about forty billionaires or so. And, of course, the concentration does not just mean that the rich get richer. The poor are also by and large—because of declining wages or prolonged unemployment at low wages, declining provision of healthcare, declining provision of social welfare, social security, and so on—in a much worse position now than they were even ten years ago. Another reason why the younger generation feels the life expectancy they have before them is much worse than that of their parents or their grandparents. So if the theme of capitalism in the 19th century that Marx is most concerned to rectify is inequality produced by capitalism, since 2008 we have become alarmingly reminded that this is indeed just the same face of capitalism. If these trends continue on their present course, we could potentially witness the kind of catastrophe that occurred in 1848, but potentially also 1917.

SL: Could you also talk about your book as an intervention on the Left, in terms of the crisis the Left is currently experiencing?

GC: Well, the spectrum of politics, of course, is different in the U.S. from what it is in Europe. We have well established labor and social democratic parties, albeit not very successful just at the moment. The oldest is the German Social Democratic Party, which originally regarded itself as one of the legitimate heirs of Marx's ideas. Most of the Left parties in Europe since the decline of Communist parties in the 1990s adhere to one or another variety of a mixed economy. So, a certain range of public services, provision of transportation, healthcare, and so on, either owned, or at least managed by, the public and certainly subject to relatively strict state control and cost management. The crucial difference here, just to take the single-most important example between Britain and the U.S., is that we have a free public health system. If you are ill, you go to the hospital, you go to your local GP and you are seen to. It is not a perfect system, but it is a very good one. And nobody goes bankrupt because of medical costs. So, this is the chief inheritance of Labour's electoral victory in 1945. Now, of course it has been picked away at and the current conservative government seems pretty clearly to want to privatize it and to allow especially North American private health companies to come in, essentially to privatize the entire business. But there is tremendous loyalty on the part of the population. So, privatizing the NHS is not on the immediate cards. So if you then think, however, of the areas like transportation, again in the postwar period, most of the railways in Europe and quite a lot of airlines were owned by the state. Following the beginnings of the trend of neoliberal thought and legislation in the Reagan-Thatcher era, quite a lot of these have been privatized, but in some countries they are still in state ownership. And amongst the aspects of the platform of the Labour Party at the moment is re-nationalization, for example, of the trains. Our railways are now the most expensive in Europe and it is not terribly reliable, sadly, either. It is a bad combination, relatively poor service and an extremely high prices. And re-nationalization is regarded as a very popular option amongst the electorate. So that's one of the things that Jeremy Corbyn has proposed should he win the next general election. So, the spectrum in that sense is rather further to the left than in the U.S.

Now, if you go back to the beginning of the question you asked about the nature of Left interventions, there is of course, after 1991, quite a lot of critical reaction to the idea of a "Left" as such, less so in Europe than in the U.S. The taint, however, of Stalinism and the whole of the Communist experience is very powerful. I have had differences with lots of friends and colleagues on this particular issue. But it has been my view pretty much all the way through that the Left has no interest whatsoever in trying to paper over the truth of what I think we can fairly call totalitarian regimes in the 20th century. Quite to the contrary. In the last book I did before this one called *Dystopia: A Natural History*, there's a long section in which I look at Stalinism in various forms, particularly Eastern European and Soviet Stalinism, and I pretty much come to the conclusion that it was a really awful system. I mean, the number of victims under Stalin is probably up to twenty million. If you count various other regimes, Maoism and so on, it goes much higher than that. And dictatorships are unpleasant. These kinds of dictatorships are particularly unpleasant. We have to just confront that. One of the questions, of course, you are led to ask if you have an interest in Marx is, what's the accountability here? How far is Marx responsible for the degradation of Marxism into various forms of dictatorship, following in particular the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917? That's a large and complicated question, but the basic observation I make here is that we have to confront Stalin if we want to go back to Marx. It is that simple. We cannot simply jump over the period from 1917 to 1991 and say, "Well, some mistakes were made, and so on, but basically Marx put forward a lot of really good ideas which we should now return to." It is quite clear that if there has been that much degradation then we need to face up to the fact. In fact I do not think the Left has a legitimate starting point anymore unless it can put its hands up and say, "*Mea culpa*, we played some role in the production of this. If we're going to move forward with a critique of capitalism which will appeal to a large part of the electorate, we have to recognize that some things went terribly wrong in the 20th century." And I think we can do that. One of the reasons why the entry-point that I have taken in the book to Marx, writing as a historian of socialism, is to Marx as a *socialist*, is that when Marx begins writing in 1842-4, he already witnesses—so to speak, in the library on the table in front of him, in the working men's clubs of Cologne, Paris, Brussels, and so on—many different contending trends within socialism. They're not all communist. They're not all revolutionary. Some have schemes of reward which would reward effort deferentially, others disagree with that and emphasize the need for equality of remuneration, and so on. If we look at Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Henri de Saint-Simon, and the lesser-known names amongst the Germans, Marx confronted, along with the followers of all these leading figures, an entire spectrum of socialist possibilities.

SL: When we look at the politics of a Jeremy Corbyn, in some sense, it looks backwards—back to the Atlee government of 1945, for instance. Whereas the question that Marx poses is, can we look back at the history of revolutionary socialism (however we understand that), i.e. the project of not simply ameliorating capitalism, but transforming it into a new form of society. Obviously, we're never going to confront the precise situation that Marx confronted, but the question remains what a 21st century return to Marx could mean. It seems that every time the Left experienced a crisis in the 20th century, there was this question of a return to Marx. What might this mean to us now, after the Left, so to speak?

GC: Well, it would be a great shame, of course, if we had not learned anything from the 19th and the 20th centuries. This would be a very sad judgment on our capacity to improve gradually from our mistakes. We have to do that, but if we're turning back to Marx in the 21st century, we want to be able to say what did not work in the paradigm establish in the 19th and moved forward in the 20th. So, if we're going back, what we're trying to do at the same time is to eliminate the possibility of at least making the same mistakes. Now, of course, the problems we're facing are not exactly the same, for reasons I specified at the outset. The environmental issue is extremely different, extremely provocative. It forces us to go beyond both Marx *and* capitalism, because we need to restrain the process of production. We need to restrain the process of consumption. We need also to restrain population growth, because there just is not enough of a planet to sustain us—we now have slightly over seven and a half billion people. We cannot really even sustain that, much less the ten to fifteen billion that we are projected to have by the end of the 21st century. So, returning to Marx will mean plundering – picking and choosing, taking the bits that seem to work, while rejecting what does not seem to work.

I expect that some of your listeners, at least, will be uncomfortable with the idea that Marx inevitably implies revolution. The view I take of this is that by the 1880s, Marx had himself suggested that capitalism was amenable to to peaceful transformation. He said that this could probably only occur in the advanced countries like Holland, Britain, America, and so on. Transformation through the ballot box is at least on the table at that point, by the time Marx dies in 1883. So we do not have to take the paradigm of 1917 as the only one we can glean from Marx. Then question then is—assuming that we agree peacefully to transform society and we want to put some new paradigm in place to replace capitalism—we need to think very carefully about what that alternative is going to be.

My sense is that there are a variety of halfway houses—the kinds of ideals contemplated by most of the Left, social democratic, socialist parties in Europe. What this implies, first of all, is a mixed economy where there is both public and private ownership. This implies control over finance capital in particular. We are all well aware there is a very substantial problem at the moment with the wealthy and very large corporations are able to avoid tax, so the burden of tax is ever pushed upon consumers and upon individual citizens. And something like 25% of the world's wealth is outhoused, located non-transparently in tax havens. So we clearly need to move sharply against these phenomena. We need to make large corporations responsible for taxes in the domains where they are making profits. We need maximum transparency, both of corporate taxation and of individual wealth accumulation.

So then mixed ownership within the economy as a whole, movement towards evermore sustainable economic goals. By sustainable, of course, we mean movement towards forms of energy production that do not involve coal and, increasingly, do not involve natural gas, and so on. So, wind and electric first and foremost. And then we need to move towards facing full-on the potentials for environmental catastrophe, towards producing goods which are not guaranteed to break within a short period of time. Producing goods for the long run, in other words, without planned obsolescence. We need to start to think through the problem of overpopulation. All of these things, I think, can be solved. The crucial thing is we have to admit that the present system is broken. We have to admit that the existing system of inequality is is extremely harmful. It is harmful not only because the poor are getting poorer. It leads to the corruption of electoral processes almost everywhere. Instead of democracy, we essentially have plutocracy. A relatively small number of people control such an amount of propaganda that they have the capacity to swing elections. So, I do not imagine a revolutionary scenario. Maybe I'm too optimistic, but I do think that the sense is just beginning to gel, especially among the younger generation, that the system is broken, the sense that it has probably been broken from the beginning. But now because of this new factor, environmental crisis, we have to address fully the implications of staying on the path that we're on. Once we face up to that, then we can set out a rational course.

SL: I want to talk now about Marx in the 19th century. One of the things about your book is that you are a historian of socialism. This raises the question of the historical moment in which Marx comes age, the 1840s. That was the time that Marx was becoming the Marx we know. As we all know, French socialism, English political economy, and German Idealism are the streams that feed into Marx. For him, this meant the legacy of the French Revolution, socialism, and the philosophical aftermath of Hegel. More precisely, who and what were Marx's key influences and points of reference in the period of 1842-8, and in what ways did those influences abide for Marx?

GC: We first encounter Marx as a serious thinker in 1842. At this point he is a radical of a type which is immediately recognizable in that environment, given the inheritance of the French Revolution of 1789. So in this time to be a radical—although there are a number of different positions covered by that term—implies, first of all, the pursuit of at least universal manhood suffrage. Some people are hoping for female suffrage as well, but not many. So universal manhood suffrage is the most important thing. Secondly, then, there is the demand for the establishment, generally speaking, of a democratic republic. That's as idea inherited from 1789. So, the abolition of the monarchy, the abolition of aristocratic privilege, and of the holding of large portions of land by the churches, and so on. That's Marx's starting point in 1842 when he becomes a journalist. Now, the trajectory of the development over the next two years is quite dramatic and extremely intense. Marx is already a very intense person to begin with, but he's thinking, burning the midnight oil constantly, in an environment where it seems at this point that revolution may well be on the cards in any number of different European countries in the near future.

So, around 1843, we find Marx disavowing any kind of communism. He remains a radical through at least 1843. The point of conversion is 1843 into 1844, and there are a number of different influences here. Of course, from the Young Hegelian circle, particularly Berlin. Men whose names are pretty well unknown today—Bruno Bauer, the communist Moses Hess, Ludwig Feuerbach, who is extremely important for Marx through 1845, and others. The point of conversion is a point at which Marx finds himself pushed on to a completely different trajectory through meeting the man who would, of course, become his lifelong intellectual partner, Friedrich Engels. They had met very briefly once beforehand, but when they first meet in August 1844 in Paris, they get on like a house on fire. Now, this is important because Engels, who works as a lowly clerk playing a minor supervisory role at a cotton-spinning factory in Manchester partly owned by his father, had become a communist as the result of a conversation with one of the few leading communists in Germany at that point, a man named Moses Hess. When Engels lands in Manchester in 1842, he's a newly-minted communist. He finds there a fairly well-organized group of the followers of the founder of English socialism, a man named Robert Owen. Eventually, Owen came to run a very successful factory at a place called New Lanark, which he becomes manager of in 1800. And so, for some strange reason, by about 1815, 1817, Owen decides, although he's making a vast amount of money—he's a very wealthy man—that he does not like the capitalist system. He does not like what it does to workers. He does not like the narrow division of labor. He does not like the conditions of work, which are hot and unhealthy. He does not like the fact that young children are being widely employed from the ages of six and seven—they are useful for crawling under the machinery and repairing broken threads and suffer large numbers of injuries as a consequence of the fact that the machinery is not wholly enclosed. They suffer from curvature of the spine as a result of bending over for twelve, sometimes even fifteen hours a day. So Owen turns against this and in the twenty years before the time when Engels meets with the local group of Owenites in Manchester, he founds the first major socialist school in Europe. So, by the time that Engels then attends every Sunday, as far as we know, the local Owenite meeting ground (they were called Halls of Science), Owen has become identified with a theory of capitalist crisis, with a critique of political economy as a way of understanding those crises and the nature of capitalism, and as proffering an alternative, which is atheistical and communistical. Marx had converted to atheism already, but communism is reinforced through this meeting with Engels. So the crucial point then, really, is the time that Marx spends in Paris in 1844, which brings about his writing of the so-called *Paris Manuscripts*, or *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.

SL: So those manuscripts are written around the time that he became friends with Engels?

GC: That's right. That very summer, as far as we know. So, there is a problem hanging over the text, insofar as—for most major modern readers, after about 1960 or so—the *Paris Manuscripts* are the entry-point into

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